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MISCELLANY

ROUSSEL AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEAUTY

THE Philosophy of Beauty is what François Roussel-Despierres styles in a sub-title his little book *L'Idéal Esthétique*. During the past year a translation of this book has been appearing month by month in THE ART WORLD; the conclusion appeared in the September number, so that the two bound volumes of the magazine contain the entire work. Our readers can now decide whether the space given it has been worthily filled; for our part we feel that a work so pregnant with the best thought of modern times has remained too long unknown to those who do not read French and is particularly fitted to English-speaking communities which are always anxious to learn the last thing uttered concerning matters of the very highest moment to all humanity.

M. Roussel's conclusions will interest believers in democracy as well as students of philosophy and religion. They will give food for thought to those who have hoped that science would furnish solid ground on which to erect the ideals that might lead mankind onward to a better existence. They may clarify the views of those who base a hope for progress on industrialism alone. Very extraordinary is the way in which M. Roussel presses the argument that the progress of mankind rests at the final analysis on our instinct—to use a word confessedly employed for lack of a better—on man's instinct for beauty.

In their fanciful, instinctive way the Greeks of the formative period expressed this by their worship of Aphrodité, Athené, Apollo and Artemis, and the Middle Ages by their cult of the gracious Mary, at once virgin and mother—all of them various types of beauty, of healing and of human progress, while the Orientals evolved Quannon and other ideals of beauty and mercifulness. Aristotle is said to have said: "Beauty is the gift of God."

L'Idéal Esthétique endeavors to explain why the human mind by all sorts of devious paths in philosophy and religion, priestcraft and idolatry has been seeking to express itself, without as yet recognizing to its full extent that

" . . . beauty dead, black chaos comes again"

but still has been holding fast to that root of all betterment which lies within us and consists of our love of the beautiful. Especially are the so-called Anglo-Saxons and Teutons apt to overlook what has been shadowed forth in countless poems and works of art and religions. They, more than others, need to study an ideal of æsthetics which is based philosophically on beauty, to enable them to understand better the future as well as the past, and cause them to give wider room and higher honors to those ideas and things that express Beauty—the foundation stone of our loftiest ideals.

IN PLACE OF APPLAUSE BY CLAPPING

To the Editor of THE ART WORLD:

HAVE you ever listened to the rendition of a symphony orchestra and been enthralled and quieted by the last shimmering dream notes from the violins, only to be rudely startled by heart-shivering applause? Hand-clapping is a relic of barbarism that an intelligent concert audience should discard. It is two steps removed from hissing and but one step removed from foot-stamping and shouting. Let football enthusiasts shout from the bleachers; it is in place there. But when Kreisler has the audience hushed with appreciative joy as he finishes a *berceuse* some one starts a burst of contagious hand-clapping that brings us abruptly to earth so flat that there is scarcely any rebounding sense of buoyancy left. We are perhaps spiritualized temporarily by a Julia Culp lullaby, but the material self intrudes all too soon when we hear "O, isn't that sweet! I wish she'd do it all over again"—gushing remarks rising perforce above the applause that almost deafens us. The word *applause*, by the way, is derived from a word meaning *to clash*.

And that brings us to the motive for applause. It is true there is often a wish for an encore due to the erroneous impression that the immediate

repetition of a beautiful performance will give the same glad thrill once more. Applause is sometimes enthusiastically spontaneous. I have heard cheers for John McCormack that were genuine outbursts. But I suspect that a few—or more—in an audience applaud, to get as much as they can for the price of the ticket—an inexcusable motive! Others really have a desire to express their pleasure to the artists in the fine interpretation of a selection just played or sung. And they use the customary way—the clapping of hands. For custom, the largest factor in the making of applause, is a graybeard to whom we unconsciously defer. From the point of view of the artist, which I am not considering, applause is often fed at the hands of a clique; for applause is the breath of life to many artists. But they, as well as audiences, need to be educated. A true musician should be able, theoretically at least, to feel the atmosphere of appreciation. He should recognize silence as the highest tribute a listener can pay.

We learn from psychology that no emotion is worth having if it does not result in some kind of action. Vain is it, for instance, to feel patriotic if we do not show it in some active way! If it